

Central Valley Flood Protection Plan: Draft Program Environmental Impact Report

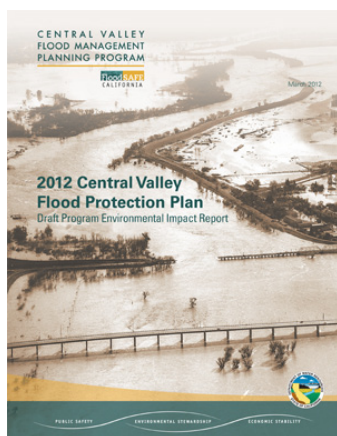
State of California (State) law, enacted through the Central Valley Flood Protection Act of 2008 and codified in Sections 9600 through 9625 of the California Water Code (CWC), requires the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to prepare the Central Valley Flood Protection Plan (CVFPP). The CVFPP proposes a State Systemwide Investment Approach (SSIA) for sustainable, integrated flood management in areas currently protected by facilities of the State Plan of Flood Control (SPFC).

The CVFPP draft program environmental impact report (DPEIR) was developed according to Section 15168 of CEQA Guidelines to inform DWR and the Central Valley Flood Protection Board (Board), about potential program-level environmental effects and mitigation measures of the CVFPP.

A program-level EIR is appropriate because the CVFPP includes geographically related actions that may have similar environmental effects, but are not sufficiently well-defined regarding specific locations, project-level details, or implementation strategies to support a project-level EIR. DWR and the Board can use the DPEIR for future planning and feasibility studies.

Description of Proposed Program

The SSIA described in the CVFPP is the proposed program evaluated in the DPEIR and includes actions to improve systemwide flood management, policies, and institutions, while enabling flexibility to address changing needs and funding scenarios. It also integrates environmental conservation strategies to improve system sustainability while improving ecosystem function.



Key features of the proposed program include:

- ◆ Improve levees that protect existing urban and urbanizing areas (populations greater than 10,000) to achieve an urban level of flood protection (from a 0.5-percent-chance event), at minimum.

- ◆ Reduce flood risk in existing small communities (populations less than 10,000), where feasible.
- ◆ Improve rural-agricultural area levees to reflect lower levels of development in these floodplains.
- ◆ Improve the overall ability of the SPFC to convey large flood events through new or modified weirs, bypass systems, hydraulic structures, or easements.
- ◆ Improve systemwide ecological conditions, using integrated policies, programs, and projects.

Proposed program implementation would depend on collaboration and independent decision-making among federal, State, and local cooperating and regulatory agencies.

Objectives of Proposed Program

Eight program objectives guided CVFPP and DPEIR development. Five objectives address CVFPP goals: a primary objective to improve flood risk management and supporting objectives to improve operations and maintenance, promote ecosystem functions, improve institutional support, and promote multi-benefit projects. Other objectives reflect legislative direction to maximize flood-risk reduction benefits within practical constraints of available funds; adopt the CVFPP by July 1, 2012; and promote, as feasible, multiple objectives provided in CWC Section 9616.

Proposed Program Activities

The proposed program includes near-term (NTMAs) and long-term management activities (LTMAAs). NTMAs are evaluated with greater specificity because they are generally better defined, less complex and more securely funded than LTMAAs; more likely to be implemented within 5 years of CVFPP adoption; and NTMA environmental impacts can be evaluated more accurately than LTMA impacts.

NTMAs might include removing sediment; repairing, reconstructing, or improving levees; altering reservoir operations criteria; purchasing floodplain easements; or implementing a vegetation management strategy. LTMAAs might include widening floodways; constructing or modifying weirs and bypasses; improving and remediating levees; constructing new levees; removing SPFC facilities; improving forecast-based reservoir operations; achieving appropriate urban, rural-agricultural and small community protection; implementing conservation elements; and changing policies and institutional structures.

Study Area

Analysis of proposed program impacts was conducted primarily within the CVFPP Systemwide Planning Area, generally including a two-mile outside buffer.



DPEIR Study Area

Alternatives to Proposed Program

Development of the CVFPP involved formulating and evaluating preliminary approaches to address CVFPP goals. CVFPP “approaches” are referred to as “alternatives” in the DPEIR. Alternatives explored

potential physical changes to the existing system and the need for policy changes or management actions.

Seven proposed program alternatives were considered for analysis in the DPEIR: a No-Project Alternative—Continued Operations Scenario, a No-Project Alternative—No Additional Activities Scenario, a Modified SSIA Alternative, an Achieve SPFC Design Flow Capacity Alternative, an Achieve SPFC Design Flow Capacity with Strict Engineering Technical Letter Compliance Alternative, a Protect High-Risk Communities Alternative, and an Enhance Flood System Capacity Alternative.

Summary of Potential Environmental Impacts

Proposed program analysis found significant or potentially significant impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant levels with implementation of mitigation measures for these issue areas: aesthetics, groundwater resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology, noise, recreation, utilities and service systems, and water quality. Mitigation measures are detailed in the DPEIR.

Agricultural and forestry resources; air quality; biological resources – aquatic; biological resources – terrestrial; cultural resources; geology, soils and seismicity; land use and planning; and transportation and traffic may have impacts that could be significant and unavoidable or potentially significant and unavoidable.

By reducing flood risk, the proposed program would have beneficial effects on biological resources; hydrology; geology, soils and seismicity; and utilities and service systems.

Next Steps

The DPEIR was circulated for public review and comment from March 6, 2012 to April 20, 2012. Comments received will be considered by DWR and the Board, and responses included in the Final PEIR. The Final PEIR is anticipated to be certified by DWR and adopted by the Board in June 2012.